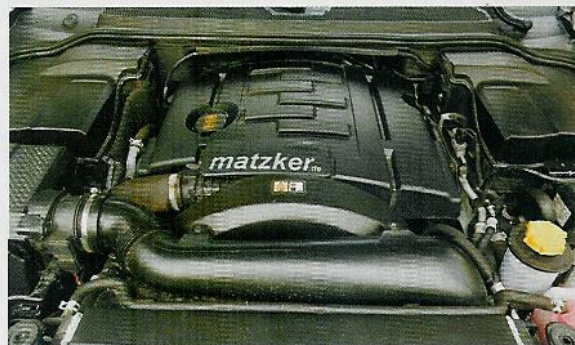


The country road has more twists than the plot of a John Le Carré novel, but they're no match for the Matzker Range Rover Sport. The firm, muscular ride inspires confidence; the harder you drive, the tighter it corners. The undulating deviations of the B-road simply can't throw it off course.

Compared to the previous Matzker vehicle I tested, a magnificently equipped Discovery 3 (LRO, December 2006), this Range Rover Sport is a revelation. Although it's fitted with the same suspension modifications, the experience is completely different.

As promised in that feature, we now have a production model to test on-road – and, boy, is it good. This isn't to say that the standard, factory set-up gives a soft or wallowy ride. Far from it; the stock Range Rover Sport is always a pleasure to drive. No, it's just that the Matzker version is better-suited to drivers who prefer to push that bit harder on- and off-road.

So why is it better? Firstly, Matzker's Selective Control shock absorbers react differently depending on your speed and the type of surface you're tackling. The theory is that they give a softer ride at lower speeds, with increased contact between the wheels and the ground. At higher speeds, the compression ratio increases and the rebound becomes much firmer.



Matzker has left its mark on this particular TDV6, which now belts out a massive 500Nm of torque. Somewhere under the shielding, 'Speed Unlimiter' now allows this Sport to gallop along at 130mph

In simple terms, when you're trundling over uneven terrain off-road or potting along a quiet country road, the suspension soaks up the lumps and bumps in the manner of soft, long-travel coil springs. But, once you begin attacking fast and twisty roads, the suspension changes, becoming much firmer, reducing bodyroll to a minimum. The Matzker shocks really deliver the best of both worlds.

To maximise the benefits of the Selective Control system, with its extra 90mm of travel, the Matzker Range Rover Sport also has the Electronic Handling and Off-Road Kit. Just like the Discovery 3 I tested last year, this Sport can raise its suspension 50mm higher and lower it 35mm further than the standard model, just by flicking a switch. Its maximum possible ground clearance has increased from 227mm to 340mm in off-road mode.



The sign of serious, Aussie-made off-road equipment



Ultra-low access height...



... quickly changes to mountain-high off-road setting



Perfect poise and balance, even when it's parked